Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:

receiving a television signal from a signal source;

displaying the television signal;

detecting an interactive option that provides a user with the ability to interact with television programming at ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system; and

automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after the [[a]] user responds to the interactive option ~~request~~.

2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

prompting a user to accept or reject the interactive option ~~request; and~~

~~in response to the user accepting the request, establishing communication with the remote device~~.

3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 [[2]], further comprising:

in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the user responded to the interactive option ~~request was accepted~~.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

in response to a user command, playing back the television signal being buffered while the user is interacting with the interactive option ~~communication is in progress~~.

6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

in response to the user rejecting the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

in response to the user not accepting the interactive option ~~request~~ within an established time interval, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein buffering comprises:

encoding the television signal; and

storing the encoded television signal in a storage device.

9-10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

in response to a user responding to the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered; and

during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resuming display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

12. (original) The method of claim 11, wherein resuming comprises:

playing back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

13. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:

receiving a television signal from a signal source;

displaying the television signal;

detecting an interactive option that provides a user with the ability to interact with television programming at ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system;

prompting the [[a]] user to accept or reject the interactive option ~~request~~; and

in response to the user accepting the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after the interactive option ~~communication with the remote device~~ is terminated.

14. (cancelled)

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 13 [[14]], further comprising:

in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was accepted.

16. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein buffering comprises:

encoding the television signal; and

storing the encoded television signal in a storage device.

17-18. (cancelled)

19. (currently amended) The method of claim [[1]] 13, further comprising:

in response to a user responding to the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered; and

during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resuming display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein resuming comprises:

playing back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

21-30. (cancelled)

31. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;

a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;

a detection component that detects an interactive option that provides a user with the ability to interact with television programming at ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system; and

a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after the [[a]] user responds to the interactive option ~~request~~.

32. (currently amended) The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a prompting component that prompts the [[a]] user to accept or reject the interactive option ~~request; and~~

~~a communication component that, in response to the user accepting the request, establishes communication with the remote device~~.

33. (currently amended) The system of claim 32, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

34. (currently amended) The system of claim 32, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the user responded to the interactive option ~~request was accepted~~.

35. (currently amended) The system of claim 32, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to a user command, plays back the television signal being buffered while the interactive option is active ~~communication is in progress~~.

36. (currently amended) The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the user rejecting the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

37. (currently amended) The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the user not accepting the interactive option ~~request~~ within an established time interval, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was detected.

38. (original) The system of claim 31, wherein the buffering component comprises:

an encoder that encodes the television signal; and

a storage device that stores the encoded television signal.

39-40. (cancelled)

41. (currently amended) The system of claim 31, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to a user responding to the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered; and

wherein the playback component, during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resumes display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

42. (currently amended) The system of claim [[11]] 41, wherein the playback component plays back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

43. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;

a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;

a detection component that detects an interactive option that provides a user with the ability to interact with television programming at ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system;

a prompting component that prompts the [[a]] user to accept or reject the interactive option ~~request~~; and

a buffering component that, in response to the user accepting the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after the interactive option ~~communication with the remote device~~ is terminated.

44. (cancelled)

45. (currently amended) The system of claim 43 [[44]], further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the interactive option ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive option ~~request~~ was accepted.

46. (original) The system of claim 43, wherein the buffering component comprises:

an encoder that encodes the television signal; and

a storage device that stores the encoded television signal.

47-48. (cancelled)

49. (currently amended) The system of claim [[41]] 43, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to a user responding to the interactive option ~~request~~, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered; and

wherein the playback component, during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resumes display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

50. (original) The system of claim 49, wherein the playback component plays back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

51. (currently amended) A system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;

a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;

a detection component that detects an interactive survey relating to the displayed television signal becoming available to a user of an ~~a network interface that sends a request to a remote device to establish communication between the remote device and the~~interactive television system; and

a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after termination of the interactive survey ~~completion of the communication~~.

52. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, wherein the buffering component automatically buffers the television signal in response to the interactive survey being detected ~~the request being sent~~.

53. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, wherein the buffering component automatically buffers the television signal in response to the user initiating the interactive survey ~~request being accepted by the remote device~~.

54. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, further comprising:

a playback component that, in response to the interactive survey ~~request~~ being rejected by the user ~~remote device~~, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive survey became available ~~request was sent~~.

55. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, further comprising:

~~a communication component that, in response to the request being accepted by the remote device, establishes communication with the remote device; and~~

a playback component that, in response to the interactive survey ~~communication~~ being completed ~~terminated~~, plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive survey became available ~~request was sent~~.

56. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, further comprising:

~~a communication component that, in response to the request being accepted by the remote device, establishes communication with the remote device; and~~

a playback component that, in response to the interactive survey ~~communication~~ being completed ~~terminated~~, plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive survey ~~request~~ was initiated by the user ~~accepted~~.

57. (currently amended) The system of claim 51, further comprising:

~~a communication component that, in response to the request being accepted by the remote device, establishes communication with the remote device; and~~

a playback component that automatically plays back the television signal being buffered in response to the termination of the interactive survey ~~establishment of communication with the remote device~~; and

wherein the playback component, during automatic playback of the buffered television signal, resumes display of a real-time television signal from the signal source in response to a user command.

58. (original) The system of claim 57, wherein the playback component plays back the buffered television signal at a modified rate in response to a transport control.

59. (cancelled)

60. (original) The system of claim 51, wherein buffering component comprises:

an encoder that encodes the television signal; and

a storage device that stores the encoded television signal.

61. (currently amended) A method in an interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the method comprising:

receiving a television signal from a signal source;

displaying the television signal;

detecting an interactive commercial opportunity relating to the displayed television signal becoming available on ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system;

automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after a user responds to the interactive commercial opportunity ~~request~~;

~~identifying a caller associated with the remote device using information contained within the request;~~

~~notifying a user of the interactive television system concerning the identity of the caller;~~

prompting the user to accept or reject the interactive commercial opportunity ~~request~~;

~~in response to the user accepting the request, establishing communication with the remote device;~~ and

in response to the interactive commercial opportunity ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically playing back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive commercial opportunity became available ~~request was detected~~.

62. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

a tuner that receives a television signal from a signal source;

a video controller that displays the television signal on a display device;

a detection component that detects an interactive commercial opportunity relating to the television signal becoming available on ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system;

a buffering component that automatically buffers the television signal for subsequent playback after a user responds to the interactive commercial opportunity ~~request~~;

~~an identification component that identifies a caller associated with the remote device using information contained within the request;~~

a prompting component that prompts ~~notifies~~ a user of the interactive television system ~~concerning the identity of the caller and prompts the user~~ to accept or reject the interactive commercial opportunity ~~request~~;

~~a communication component that, in response to the user accepting the request, establishes communication with the remote device;~~ and

a playback component that, in response to the interactive commercial opportunity ~~communication~~ being terminated, automatically plays back the television signal being buffered from a point in time at which the interactive commercial opportunity ~~request~~ was initiated by the user ~~detected~~.

63. (currently amended) A interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

means for receiving a television signal from a signal source;

means for displaying the television signal;

means for detecting an interactive option relating to the television signal becoming available on ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system; and

means for automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after a user responds to the interactive option ~~request~~.

64. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

means for receiving a television signal from a signal source;

means for displaying the television signal;

means for detecting an interactive option relating to the television signal becoming available on ~~a request from a remote device to establish communication with~~ the interactive television system;

means for prompting a user to accept or reject the interactive option ~~request~~; and

means for automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback in response to the user accepting the interactive option ~~request~~.

65. (currently amended) An interactive television system for mitigating interruptions during television viewing, the system comprising:

means for receiving a television signal from a signal source;

means for displaying the television signal;

means for detecting an interactive option relating to the television signal becoming available on ~~sending a request to a remote device to establish communication between the remote device and~~ the interactive television system; and

means for automatically buffering the television signal for subsequent playback after completion of the interactive option ~~communication~~.

66. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the interactive option comprises at least one option selected from the group consisting of completing surveys, following an Internet link embedded in a television broadcast, and making an online purchase.

67. (new) The method of claim 1, wherein the interactive option is enabled by sending at least one trigger to the interactive television system.

68. (new) The method of claim 67, wherein the trigger comprises a network address.